

**CONTEXT STATEMENT**

**SOUTH LAKE UNION HISTORIC  
SURVEY AND INVENTORY**



PREPARED FOR: THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM  
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## **2005 SOUTH LAKE UNION HISTORIC SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

### **CONTEXT STATEMENT**

#### **South Lake Union Neighborhood Boundaries and Definitions**

The South Lake Union neighborhood, for the purposes of this study, covers the area bounded by the western side of Fairview Avenue North to Aurora Avenue North, and from Mercer Street to Denny Street. A 2004 study of the adjacent Cascade Neighborhood described the area from the eastern side of Fairview Avenue North to Interstate 5 and from Roy Street to Denny Street.

In previous studies and in general discussions over at least the past 30 years, the exact definitions of “South Lake Union” versus “Cascade” have varied somewhat depending on the study. The Cascade and the South Lake Union neighborhoods frequently have been described as one and the same and covering an area roughly from Aurora Avenue North to Interstate 5 and from Roy Street or the southern edge of Lake Union to Denny Street, with even, in some cases the inclusion of what is currently known as the Denny Triangle.

It remains that the history South Lake Union neighborhood as defined here, as well as the history of Cascade, as defined by the most recent studies, are tied to each other and to the history and development of the southern shore of Lake Union. In the following discussion of the South Lake Union area, the Cascade neighborhood, defined as the eastern portion of the entire South Lake Union neighborhood, will be described, where it is applicable to the general context of South Lake Union. Cascade’s development also owes much to its proximity to Capitol Hill and to Denny Hill and also to the Denny Regrade. The South Lake Union neighborhood has greater ties with Queen Anne Hill, but also to Denny Hill and to the Denny Regrade. The topography and physical characteristics of the entire South Lake Union area has evolved over time, first as a result of natural phenomena and then as a result of human intervention.

#### **Geological Formations and Archeological Evidence**

Geological studies suggest that glaciers formed the area about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago. When the glaciers retreated, they left a basin of organic peat, which was to become Lake Union, and glacial till on the nearby Denny, Capitol and Queen Anne Hills. What much later became the South Lake Union neighborhood evolved into heavily forested sloping land. Although less is known about the area from geological times until the 1850s and no official archeological sites have been identified in the immediate South Lake Union neighborhood, archeological remains were found in the vicinity, at the foot of Bell Street. Archeologists are fairly certain that Duwamish villages existed along the shores of Lake Union and that, in particular, there was a winter village at the south end of Lake Union. In general, the Duwamish territory included the shores of Salmon Bay, Lake Washington, Lake Union and of Elliott Bay, in addition to the banks of the Duwamish, Green and Cedar Rivers.<sup>1</sup>

### **Native Americans**

Evidence of an early Duwamish presence is supported by the accounts of pioneers, who first explored the South Lake Union area sometime around 1852. The pioneers found several Native American camps, particularly along the South Lake Union shoreline, close to a stream at 8<sup>th</sup> and Thomas Street and near what is now Westlake Avenue North. There was also a stream near “Boren Street.”<sup>2</sup> Also associated with the South Lake Union area are accounts that give Chinook and Duwamish expressions for important geographical features. For instance, the name for Lake Union in Chinook was “Tenass Chuck,” from the word “Tenass,” meaning “fluid” or “water” and “chuck”, a word for “small” or “child.” In other words, the “Little Water.” The Chinook expression for Lake Washington was “Hyas Chuck” or “Big Water.” In Duwamish, Lake Union was called “meman hartshu,” meaning “Little Lake.”<sup>3</sup>

There are descriptions by early settlers of Native Americans hunting for deer and elk and drying fish and clams by their huts. They are also described gathering root vegetables as well as plants, such as camas, bracken and wapato and berries, to supplement their fish and meat diet. It is also said that Native encampments in what is now the Cascade area disbanded in 1875, when a tree destroyed their longhouse during a windstorm. The Duwamish used a trail that connected the south end of the lake to what became known as Elliott Bay.<sup>4</sup> By 1862, there was also a road along what is now Dexter Avenue North, which connected Lake Union to Elliott Bay. It is possible, but not

certain, that the 1862 road, built by the pioneers, may have followed the original Duwamish trail. With the arrival of the pioneers, the area saw other transformations, although, at first, these were gradual and somewhat subtle, compared to the development of the original city of Seattle, located south of this area (now the Pioneer Square Historic District).<sup>5</sup>

### **Louisa and David Denny, Thomas Mercer and Early Settlement**

Of all of Seattle's early pioneers, David Denny is, by far, the most important to the history of South Lake Union. In 1853, David and Louisa Denny staked their claim, which ran from the southern shore of Lake Union to what is now Denny Street and included the present Seattle Center grounds. The South Lake Union neighborhood, depending on how it is defined, is mainly located within the Dennys' original claim. The Dennys' first home was a cabin, built in 1853 on the north side of Denny Hill, which corresponds to the grass patch north of the fountain at Seattle Center. In the context of South Lake Union, early settler Thomas Mercer, who staked the land north and west of the Denny property, is especially important for giving Lake Union its present name. His fervent hope was that someday "Lake Union" would be joined to Lake Washington and to Elliott Bay.<sup>6</sup>

Early on, in 1864, Louisa and David Denny donated a five acre portion of their claim for the creation of a public cemetery. At the time, both the Denny claim and the cemetery could only be reached with difficulty by wagon roads from the center of town, in what is now Pioneer Square. By the 1880s, conditions had changed and the area was much more accessible. The Dennys drew up a new deed, which turned the former cemetery site into Seattle's first public park. First named "Seattle Park," the park was subsequently renamed "Denny Park." It appears as "Denny Park" in Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps dating from 1893, but may have been renamed as early as 1887.<sup>7</sup>

While the Dennys showed a strong sense of civic duty by creating first a cemetery and then Seattle's first public park, David Denny also made important contributions to Seattle's future industries and economy. One of his early acts was to clear land near the shore of Lake Union. In 1882, the Lake Union Lumber and Manufacturing Company had been established, with a southern boundary slightly north of the intersection of what is now Mercer St and Westlake Avenue North. According to Clarence Bagley, in 1882, Seattle's waterfront was crowded with lumber mills and this was the first mill established outside of Seattle's original downtown. Denny bought the mill in

1884 and renamed it the Western Mill. He operated it for the next 11 years, and under his ownership, it prospered and grew.<sup>8</sup>

Based on a comparison of Sanborn maps from 1888 and 1893, during this period, the extent of the buildings associated with the Western Mill, which was already significant in 1888, expanded south from Mercer to at least Republican Street. One of the few unrelated neighboring businesses was a Chinese laundry, located at the southwest corner of Terry Avenue North and Mercer St. Not surprisingly, the mill also had a fair number of employees, who lived in its vicinity. Photographs from the 1880s show wooden mill structures near the shore of the Lake, and by 1885, farther inland from the shore, a whole series of one story, gabled wood buildings, including a schoolhouse. Since Denny's sawmill created much wood debris, it was used to create landfill on the southern shore of the Lake. It is reported that before the arrival of David Denny, Lake Union was about one third larger than it is today. By the 1880s, other mills began to spring up as well along Lake Union's shores.<sup>9</sup>

There were also several other smaller businesses in the area. Some prospered, while many closed after a few years. The Washington Broom Works moved to Lake Union in 1889, but closed in 1890. There were several brickyards near Lake Union. As early as 1876, Frazier and Moon had a brickyard which in one year produced 750,000 bricks. In 1882, J. C. McAllister's brickyard was supplying most of the brick used in Seattle; when the brickyard's business expanded further, it was moved to the Duwamish area. The Lake Union Furniture Company, established on the upper floor of Denny's mill building in 1883 was a prosperous business, but finally closed in 1895.<sup>10</sup>

As early as the 1870s, another major industry associated with Lake Union was coal and coal transportation. Coal had been discovered near Issaquah. Initially, the transport of coal from this area to ships harbored at Elliott Bay was cumbersome and difficult: Coal was brought by barge across Lake Washington to Portage Bay, put on wagons to be delivered to the shore of Lake Union, then barged again across Lake Union to the southern shore, from which it was delivered by wagon to Elliott Bay. By 1872, to facilitate the leg of the trip from the shores of South Lake Union, track was laid for a narrow gauge railroad that would deliver the coal directly to a newly built coal dock

on Pike Street. By 1877, this rail line had been abandoned, but the area near the rail line became first a path, then a wooden boardwalk and eventually turned into present day Westlake Avenue.<sup>11</sup>

Whether transportation of logs or coal or other goods was involved, the distinct bodies of water, separated by land, continued to be a serious hindrance. In addition to Thomas Mercer, other commentators, including writers for the Seattle Gazette in 1864, would continue to discuss the possible joining of Lake Union and Lake Washington. Clarence Bagley even credits General George McLellan and Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, with taking an interest in this idea as early as 1853, although another historian, C. H. Hanford, disputes this fact. The union of the two bodies of water, however, would have to wait until the early Twentieth Century.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, the Lake Washington Improvement Company was formed in 1883. Among the owners of the company were David Denny, Thomas Burke and Guy Phinney. The company's goal was to connect Lake Washington and Lake Union with the Puget Sound through Shilshole Bay. To effect these connections, a small canal was dug between Lake Union and Salmon Bay in early 1884 by labor provided by the Wa Chong Company, owned by Chin Chun Hock. In 1885, the Lake Washington Improvement Company cut a weir, described by Clarence Bagley, as a "wooden lock", at Montlake to float logs between Lake Union and Lake Washington. As accessibility to Lake Union improved, its shores and environs would welcome additional businesses and an increasing number of wood frame houses and utilitarian structures.<sup>13</sup>

## **Early urban development and building stock - 1880s to 1900**

### The Street Grid

In the late 1870s, despite the first real residential boom, which included about fifty residents in the vicinity of Westlake Avenue and Roy Street, the area was still fairly wild. For instance, in 1878, a three-hundred pound cougar was reportedly killed in the area.<sup>14</sup> Sophie Frye Bass, in an account in her book Pigtail Days in Old Seattle, described the gradual appearance, during the same period, of frame houses, gardens and picket fences amidst the wilder landscape between South Lake Union and Seattle proper.<sup>15</sup>

Early maps show that, by 1888, a street grid was set up. It was laid out according to a north-south/east-west grid that is the basis for the grid seen in South Lake Union today. The names of the streets, however, differed from present names and were still unchanged in the early 1890s, according to maps from 1893. Of the streets or avenues that run north-south, only Dexter Avenue North, known as Dexter Street, had roughly the name it has today. The north-south thoroughfares, however, were described as streets, rather than avenues. In addition, streets that ran east-west, such as John, Thomas and Harrison streets, began as numbered streets: John Street was “Second Street,” Thomas Street was “Third” and Harrison Street, “Fourth.” Roy Street appears to have been “Morse Street,” while Republican St had its present name. Fairview Avenue North appears on the 1888 and 1893 Sanborn maps as “Lake or Prohibition Street,” while Boren Avenue was “Moltke Street,” and Terry Avenue was “Bismarck Street.” Moving west, Westlake Avenue was “Rollin Street,” 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North was “Orion Street” 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North was “Vine Street,” Dexter Avenue North was “Dexter Street,” and Aurora Avenue North was “Farm Street.” By 1905, at least, most of the names used today appear to have been in use. The development of the new street grid encouraged the creation of various modes of transportation which would carry passengers from the Lake Union area to points north and to Seattle’s downtown center.<sup>16</sup>

### Early Transportation

While the early attempt to have a rail line devoted to coal transportation failed in the 1870s, in the 1880s, passenger ferries, with names like ‘David T. Denny’ and “Latona,” (the former name for the Wallingford area), carried riders to more remote communities like Fremont.<sup>17</sup> Other experiments with transportation attempted to tie Lake Union more directly to Seattle’s urban center. By the early 1880s, Frank Osgood, a new arrival from Boston, created a horse drawn street car system, the Seattle Street Railway Company, which had several lines that ran from downtown to Lake Union.<sup>18</sup>

By the late 1880s, along with several other notable business people, Luther Henry Griffith organized an electric streetcar system, the West Street, Lake Union and Park Transit Company. The system included a line which would carry passengers from Pike Street, along a new thoroughfare, corresponding to present day Westlake Avenue, to the shores of Lake Union. Not long before the Great Depression of 1893, D. T. Denny & Sons bought Griffith’s streetcar holdings, but unfortunately, the lines were not economically successful. David Denny lost a fortune in the

investment and never regained his wealth.<sup>19</sup> In 1895, Denny also sold the Western Mill to J. S. Brace and Frank Hergert, who operated it as the Brace /Hergert Mill until the 1920s.<sup>20</sup> Griffith and Denny's involvement with electric streetcar lines, however, set the stage for the development of a comprehensive streetcar system, which was consolidated in 1900 by the Seattle Electric Company, and continued to provide service to the Lake Union area.<sup>21</sup>

### School Buildings

Based on Sanborn maps, even by 1893, outside of the Western Mill, the most noticeable buildings in the general vicinity of Lake Union were school buildings. To the east, the Cascade School was a stately masonry pile, designed by architect John Parkinson, while to the west, on what is now Queen Anne Hill, the Denny School had also been built. In the same period, a larger wooden building, clearly noted on the 1893 Sanborn map, was a Hotel Union, located on Mercer St and "Moltke" Street, now Boren Avenue North.<sup>22</sup>

### Early Frame Residences

The increasing density of the entire Lake Union area continued to depend on wood frame homes, built on scattered plots of land. Few of the frame houses from this early time are still extant, although there are a few notable examples and some interesting records concerning the early settlement of the area.

To the east of the Denny claim, in present day Cascade, Margaret and Rezius Pontius, staked a claim in 1885 and built a house. A photograph of Margaret Pontius standing in front of her home was taken by photographer Theodore Peiser around 1890. The main house was a simple wood and gable roofed building. Two stories high with a porch, it was surrounded by several one story shed like buildings.<sup>23</sup> By 1889, there was also a "Pontius Mansion," designed by architect John Parkinson at Denny Way near what is now Yale Avenue. It was a much more ornate Queen Anne house, with at least one turret, a wrap around porch and landscaping. Unfortunately, none of these houses are still standing.<sup>24</sup>

The most common wood frame buildings were the many workingman's cottages, built in the 1890s and 1900s. Of these, a few single family houses are still standing in present-day Cascade,



particularly along Republican Street. This line of extant single family houses in the Cascade neighborhood is continued in the South Lake Union neighborhood by a group of frame residences on Republican Street, including 1124 and 1116 Republican Street, which date from the early 1900s. Both these simple gabled houses are typical of early workingman's cottages of the 1900s; although early maps suggest that even these houses may have been moved to the area during the earliest phase of the Denny Regrade.

The other single family house with any architectural integrity is 766 Thomas Street, located between 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and Dexter Avenue North on Thomas Street. The house, which dates from 1903, is distinguished by its intersecting hipped roofs and projecting bays. The last example of residential architecture in South Lake Union, roughly from this period, is 800-810 Harrison Street, a wood frame apartment building, which dates from 1911. This type of clapboard multi-family building was once very common in Seattle in the 1910s, but there are now very few of these, particularly in areas close to downtown Seattle.<sup>25</sup>

### **Early Residential Populations –1880s –1900s**

The nature of the early residential population is reflected in the small number of extant workers cottages and in a few religious buildings, particularly in Cascade. The early residents were associated with the industries and businesses that operated around South Lake Union. The neighborhood began to serve a somewhat varied working class and immigrant population. Cascade, which would later become the residential neighborhood associated with Lake Union, still has vestiges of the original settlement of the area. Immanuel Lutheran Church, originally built in 1892, before the Denny Regrade, at “Minor Avenue and Olive Street,” was succeeded by the present church building at Pontius Avenue North and John Street. Begun in 1907 and completed in 1912, the present Immanuel Lutheran, now a City of Seattle landmark, served mainly Norwegian immigrants, who also lived nearby. Residents of Swedish and Danish backgrounds, served respectively by Gethsemane Lutheran Church and the Norwegian-Danish Baptist Church, also lived in the neighborhood. (Both original churches were located on Denny Hill and are no longer standing).<sup>26</sup>

Cascade also welcomed recent Greek, Serbian and Russian arrivals, (some of the Russians came via Alaska), who first attended the St. Spiridon Church, erected in 1895 at 817 Lakeview Avenue. The ensemble of buildings that made up the original St. Spiridon was replaced in the 1930s by the present church, which is also a City of Seattle landmark.<sup>27</sup> In addition, prior to 1910, for a short time, there was a group of recent Italian immigrants, who are described as living in the South Lake Union area, and were employed by a local garbage collection firm. Apparently, the group dispersed after 1910, when City began to sponsor its own garbage collection service.<sup>28</sup>

As the urban density of the South Lake Union area increased, a series of urban and engineering plans were proposed for the area. Some were merely discussed, but were never put into effect, while others were to have far-reaching results.

#### **“Smaller” Unbuilt Designs from 1901 to 1911 and the Denny Regrade**

The plan for a major canal project to connect Lake Union and Lake Washington remained an important topic of discussion in Seattle from the 1890s through the 1910s. A related plan, suggested in 1901, but not effected at that time, called for the United States Navy to use Lake Union as a storage basin for inactive ships, once the proposed Lake Washington Ship Canal was completed.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the Locks Scheme, which would eventually unite Lake Washington and Lake Union and allow easy passage to the Puget Sound was not completed until 1917, with the entire canal project not completed until the 1930s. Another idea, proposed by Seattle Mayor Hiram Gill in 1910, but also dropped, was to sluice Queen Anne Hill into Lake Union.<sup>30</sup>

While none of these comparatively smaller projects were put into effect, Reginald Heber Thomson, who first arrived in Seattle in 1881 and became City Engineer in 1892, was successful in altering the topography of an important part of Seattle. Thomson believed that Seattle's many hills, and particularly Denny Hill, were a severe hindrance to transportation and to Seattle's development as a commercial center and major city. The Denny Regrade, which took place in several phases from 1898 to 1930, involved the gradual removal of Denny Hill and the regrading of major streets, with some excess dirt sluiced into Elliott Bay. Thomson's autobiography discusses the earlier phases in more detail. The regrading of First Avenue from Pike Street to Denny Way was completed in 1898. This was followed by the regrading of Second Avenue, particularly from Yesler to Denny Way,

which was complete by 1906. While these early efforts seem to have been more concentrated in present day downtown and Belltown, they also changed areas north of downtown, in the Lake Union area. In 1907, Westlake Avenue was regraded with a significant amount of fill added north of Denny Way. In the same year, Valley Street and Fairview Avenue were also regraded. A total of 85,394 cubic yards of earth were removed from Fairview Avenue. Later, in 1910, Dexter Avenue was regraded and 72,442 cubic yards of earth were removed. 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, regraded and lowered, lost 196,748 cubic yards of earth.<sup>31</sup>

With this much regrading, a number of frame houses were moved to other locations. According to local oral history, several extant houses along Republican Street in the Lake Union/ Cascade neighborhoods arrived there as a result of the Denny Regrade. In the Lake Union neighborhood, while there is no certainty in the case of 1124 and 1116 Republican Street, the two other neighboring houses, 1118 and 1114 Republican St, although they date from the early 1900s, are not shown on maps in their present location until 1928. Assuming that the historical Baist and Kroll maps are reasonably accurate, it seems likely that these houses were moved to their present location and that the story concerning 1124 and 1116 Republican St may also be true.<sup>32</sup>

The last phase of the Denny Regrade had a particular effect on Denny Park. During the late 1920s, while the neighborhood around the park was being significantly regraded, Denny Park, as designed and replanted in 1903, was left intact for some time and rose some 60 feet above the newly regraded area. It was finally flattened in 1930 and redesigned in the form we see it today, by L. Glenn Hall of the Seattle Parks Department.

### **The Bogue Plan**

By 1911, the Denny Regrade had already significantly flattened the topography of a major part of the city as well as South Lake Union. South Lake Union was now more accessible from Seattle's downtown, still located near Pioneer Square, and from areas which correspond to present-day downtown. Along with individual single family houses other social and public centers, such as major hotels and places of worship, were removed or displaced, forcing major changes in the lives of former residents of Denny Hill.

In 1910, Seattle voters authorized the creation of the Municipal Plans Commission, which in turn hired Virgil Bogue, a civil engineer and nationally known planner, to provide a master plan for Seattle's development. In 1911, Bogue proposed a new design, which involved relocating Seattle's downtown business district. At the time, other interests wanted to keep the center of the business district farther south, in the vicinity of Second and James Street, in the present day Pioneer Square Historic District.

Bogue's ambitious plan would have moved the center of the business district near the intersection of Blanchard Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The scheme is a typical "City Beautiful" plan, with boulevards radiating north and diagonally east and west from this intersection into the South Lake Union area. Drawings also show a grouping of Beaux Arts buildings, including a train station and ferry terminal on South Lake Union. In 1912, voters rejected the plan, just as the University of Washington Metropolitan Tract was being developed. As a result, the center of the business district was relocated north of the old heart of Seattle, but south of Bogue's proposed Blanchard and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue center. While the Bogue Plan, which would have had a far-reaching effect on South Lake Union, was rejected, South Lake Union continued to garner the attention of business and industrial interests.<sup>33</sup>

### **Other Plans, Buildings and Trends Around the 1910s**

While the South Lake Union continued to be the subject of several unfulfilled plans, but also underwent significant changes to its topography, in 1909, the Northern Pacific Railroad was granted a franchise to build a railroad line along the west side of Lake Union. Between 1913 and 1914, at Terry Avenue, the Northern Pacific Railroad built a brick and concrete freight and distribution depot, which replaced a previous Fremont Station. Goods from north Seattle and from Canada, as well as those acquired along the Northern Pacific's northern route between Seattle and the Midwest, were distributed from this freight depot. The building, which is still standing at 970 Thomas Street, appears to have been the center of a bustling transportation system. A two story brick warehouse to the west, 959 Harrison Street, built in 1916, is thought to have also served as part of a freight depot complex. Later used by the Great Northern Railroad in the 1930s, the depot building at 970 Thomas Street was remodeled in 1973 to house the Terry Avenue Freighthouse Restaurant, which operated into the 1980s.<sup>34</sup>

On the eastern side of Terry Avenue, one of the oldest extant warehouse buildings at 310 Terry Avenue is a two story brick building, also built in 1914 and completed in 1915. Notable for its distinct bays, simple ornament and multi-pane sash at the second floor windows, the building housed the Kelly Goodwin Hardwood Company. While this is another example of a lumber related business in South Lake Union, new industries were rapidly gaining a foothold in South Lake Union in the 1910s.

The presence of the Kelly Goodwin Hardwood Company Building and of the new railway line and freight depot indicate that, by the 1910s, the South Lake Union area was clearly an attractive location for industrial development. Marking this trend, another important milestone was the construction of Seattle City Light's Lake Union Steam Plant in 1914. This reflected the victory of a publicly owned utility company over a privately financed competitor, the Seattle Electric Company, owned by Stone & Webster. It also meant that the Lake Union area now had easy and cheap access to electricity.<sup>35</sup>

In the same year, the brick and terra cotta Ford Motor Plant, located at Valley Street and designed by John Graham, Senior, was the first Ford factory built west of the Mississippi. No doubt also encouraged by the easy availability of electricity, the Ford Motor Company's choice of this site for a new Model-T assembly plant near South Lake Union was influenced by the imminent completion of the Ballard Locks and of the Lake Washington Ship Canal in 1917. Although Ford later moved its plant to Marginal Way in 1930, its initial location in the South Lake Union encouraged other auto related businesses to locate in the area.<sup>36</sup>

In this period, with the development of new industrial cleaning methods, laundries also began to thrive in Seattle, but especially in the South Lake Union area. In the Cascade neighborhood, the Metropolitan Laundry Building, (later called the New Richmond Laundry), with a first wing constructed in 1917, was built at Pontius Avenue North and Thomas St. The Supply Laundry, with a first building constructed between 1908 and 1912, was built at Yale Avenue North and Republican Street. Laundries continued to be a major industry in the South Lake Union area. They also played an important role in Seattle's labor history. Labor strikes became increasingly prevalent

in Seattle, particularly in the late 1910s. South Lake Union, in particular, was associated with these strikes. There was a major demonstration and a strike by the “laundry girls” at the Supply Laundry, known as one of several laundries where working conditions were especially oppressive.<sup>37</sup> Later, in 1927, the Troy Laundry Building, designed by architect V. W. Voorhees, with additions by Henry Bittman, was constructed at Fairview Avenue North and Republican Street. This is a striking Beaux Arts brick and terra cotta-clad buildings and a Seattle landmark.

In general, during the World War I period, the entire South Lake Union area was still a combination of basic industrial buildings, frame single family houses and a few apartment buildings. Many residents worked at local businesses, such as the laundries, but, at the same time, the area was not strictly working class. Dave Beck, later the President of the Teamsters, grew up in and around the South Lake Union neighborhood. He attended the Cascade School and had a paper route that included Cascade and part of Capitol Hill. His mother worked in a laundry at 8<sup>th</sup> and Olive Street for a time. He described his impressions of the neighborhood to Roger Sale, author of Seattle, Past to Present: Workers and artisans lived side by side with more affluent residents, whose were the owners of very successful local businesses. This also produced a wealth of progressive and sometimes radical discussions and ideals. In the words of Roger Sale: “It was an area where populist and progressive ideas grew, ranging from middle-class causes like women’s suffrage and prohibition to trade unionism of various shades of radicalism and militancy.”<sup>38</sup>

### **The End of World War I and After**

At the end of the 1910s, the war effort, coupled with the completion of the Ballard Locks and of the Lake Washington Ship Canal, had stimulated shipbuilding and the production of marine related goods. While the war related maritime industry had always been important along Elliott Bay, the easier connection, afforded by the completed canals, allowed for increased production in the South Lake Union area, toward the end of the war. Shipping from Lake Washington via Lake Union to Puget Sound was now much easier. Bill Boeing also founded the Boeing Airplane Company on Lake Union in 1916. The Boeing Company aided the war effort by the construction of seaplanes, as well as service boats, but the corporation’s main business during the war was the construction of airplanes for the navy and the army.<sup>39</sup>

These industries signaled the availability of the South Lake Union area for further commercial and industrial development, but with the end of the war, industrial production of this kind actually declined and Lake Union was used to store surplus and outdated ships. At the same time, the eastern portions of the area, in present-day Cascade, still tied to the western flank of Capitol Hill, continued to retain a high number of residences.<sup>40</sup>

### **Post World War I – Industrial Buildings and Population Movements**

During the post World War I period, while industrial uses encouraged by the war slowed, South Lake Union developed as a commercial area, with a special emphasis on automobile showrooms and automobile maintenance. While some of Seattle's previous showrooms and auto-related businesses were located on Capitol Hill, lack of space in this neighborhood, as well as the presence of the Ford Motor Plant at Valley Street influenced similar development in the South Lake Union area. By the 1920s, a string of automobile related buildings, several elaborately decorated in terra cotta, was erected along Westlake Avenue. In addition, warehouse buildings, which often combine the vernacular with interesting high style elements, were constructed throughout South Lake Union.

Chief among the ornate automobile showrooms was the William O. McKay Ford Sales and Service Building, located at 601 Westlake Avenue North and completed in 1925. It was designed by the architectural firm of Thomas and Grainger, responsible for major buildings in Seattle, including the Pike Place Market's Corner Market Building (1911-1912).<sup>41</sup> The exterior of the showroom building stands out because of its ornamental terra cotta cladding, including pilasters, which display Renaissance Revival bas-reliefs, consisting of white terra cotta garlands and candelabra motifs on a blue background. Adjoining this building is 609 Westlake Avenue North, designed by Warren H. Milner for E. F. Sweeney in 1922 as the Ford Auto Sales and Garage Building. Milner was also the architect of the earlier Brewster Apartments in the Cascade Neighborhood. 609 Westlake Avenue North has a simpler exterior than its neighbor, with hints of French Renaissance Revival and is also clad in terra cotta.

Another terra cotta clad building associated with the automobile industry and located at 400 Westlake Avenue North is the Firestone Tire Building. It was initially designed by the Austin Company, and completed in 1929. The building's exterior exhibits sophisticated ornamental

detailing, reflecting the influence of both the Art Deco style, as well as hints of Gothic Revival. Subsequent alterations to the building in 1937 and 1943 were made according to designs by architect V. W. Voorhees. In 1927, the Austin Company also designed another noteworthy industrial building in the South Lake Union area. This concrete structure, most likely designed for Pioneer Sand and Gravel, is still located on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North at 901 Harrison Street.

Also initially related to the automotive industry, but clad in brick, is the building at 333 Westlake Avenue North. Completed in 1928, it was designed by architect O. F. Nelson for the Durant Motor Company. A more utilitarian, but well designed concrete warehouse, is the building initially designed for “O. M. Gaudy Company Auto Dealer” at 114 Westlake Avenue North and completed in 1925. The main façade has a tripartite composition, defined by continuous piers, in addition to a significant amount of original industrial sash and original transom lites at the first floor.<sup>42</sup>

Several architecturally notable buildings along Westlake Avenue North were constructed for more general industrial uses. Among these, is the two-story Gothic Revival building at 507 Westlake Avenue North, completed in 1925. Despite some changes to the ground floor showroom windows, the façade retains important architectural elements. In particular, it is distinguished by the use of Gothic Revival terra cotta ornament, which contrasts with light brown brick. The building façade also retains multi-pane transoms at the first story, as well as multi-pane glazing at the second story.<sup>43</sup>

Notable brick-clad warehouse buildings, dating from the 1920s, are also still extant in South Lake Union. Along Fairview Avenue North, in addition to the classical Troy Laundry Building, originally designed by V. W. Voorhees in 1927, there are two warehouse buildings from the 1920s. The Granville Building at 413 Fairview Avenue, also by Voorhees, has a classically composed, brick clad façade, with classical ornamental motifs in cast stone. It was completed in 1924. At 334 Boren Avenue, a warehouse originally built for the Boren Investment Company in 1925, has a heavy timber interior structure with exterior brick walls. Designed by the Seattle architecture firm of Stuart and Wheatley, it housed the United States Radiator Corporation for many years.



Farther to the west, Dexter Avenue North has a series of classically composed, brick clad buildings, designed by the same architect, William R. Grant, and originally for the same client A. J. Eberharter. They were built toward the end of the 1920s and during the early 1930s. These buildings, which were either designed as warehouses or store buildings, which usually sold industrial products, include: 513 Dexter Avenue North (1928), 430 Dexter Avenue North (1928), 400-410 Dexter Avenue North (1930), 228 Dexter Avenue North (1933) and most likely 522 Dexter Avenue North (1928) and 509 Dexter Avenue North (1930).

The buildings, which are one to two stories in height, exhibit common characteristics: a symmetrical composition, brick cladding, which is often rug brick in a variety of browns, distinctive brick patterns, raised parapets, pilasters signaling the edges of a bay or of the façade, cast stone trim and storefronts with transom lites. Ornamental shields in cast stone often accentuate the center of the façade or a particular bay.<sup>44</sup> Highlighting 400-410 Dexter Avenue North, is one of Seattle's signature cast-iron clocks, manufactured by the Joseph Mayer Company of Seattle or one of its successor firms. Originally known as the E. J. Towle Clock, and now as the West Earth Clock, this is a City of Seattle landmark, along with the other nine or ten Mayer clocks in Seattle. Joseph Mayer, himself, worked in the building for about two years before his death in 1937.<sup>45</sup> Several of these Dexter Avenue buildings were built during the late 1920s, but a few were completed during the early years of the Depression.

With the coming of the Depression in 1929, the national economy was in a shambles. While construction slowed, clearly it did not cease immediately in South Lake Union. The end of the 1920s saw the final regrading of the South Lake Union area. Denny Park was finally flattened in 1930 and redesigned by L. Glenn Hall.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the Firestone Tire Building and warehouses along Dexter Avenue North, already described, several other buildings from this period, designed in the Art Deco Style, stand out. 777 Thomas Street, designed by architect George Wellington Stoddard, as an "ordinary masonry utility building" and completed in 1931, is distinguished by its Art Deco geometrical patterns and sculptural door surround. In addition, Stoddard designed an Art Deco "masonry store building," which housed the Builders' Hardware Supply Company from 1938 to the early 1950s. The building, located at 227 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, has fluted pilasters and a combination of geometric and floral motifs.<sup>47</sup>

The Seattle Times Building, designed by R. C. Reamer and completed in 1931, was designed for a well-known client. The office wing of the building has piers with a veneer of fluted Indiana limestone and decorative aluminum spandrel panels, while the “mechanical wing” was somewhat simpler. Like the more modest industrial buildings built in South Lake Union, the grander Art Deco Seattle Times Building was designed to be a very functional building, which accommodated essential machinery in its “mechanical wing.” The Seattle Times’ presence was also to have an increasing influence the development of South Lake Union.<sup>48</sup>

Not long after the completion of the Seattle Times Building, in 1932, the Aurora Speedway, (now Highway 99), was built, making South Lake Union very accessible from points north, but cutting it off somewhat from Queen Anne Hill. By the mid-1930s, building activity was definitely at standstill.<sup>49</sup> In the eastern part of the South Lake Union area, however, one contribution was the construction of Cascade Park, then known as Cascade Playground. The WPA project was begun in 1934, with the addition of the comfort station in 1937-38 and of the wading pool in 1938-1939.<sup>50</sup>

By 1938, while South Lake Union now had a great number of warehouse buildings, the eastern portion of the neighborhood, often described as Cascade, still had fairly large grouping of single residences, interspersed with warehouse buildings. These included several laundry buildings and smaller businesses - furniture stores, grocery stores and the like. Along Westlake Avenue North, from Denny Way to as far north as Valley Street, there were about ninety businesses, with one third of them still automobile related.<sup>51</sup>

It was in this climate that in 1939, the First Norwegian Lutheran Church, now called the Denny Park Lutheran Church, was built at its present site north of Denny Park, between Thomas and John Streets, on Dexter Avenue North. Designed by architect, Bjarne Moe, the new church building replaced a previous one located at Virginia and Boren Street, which was used by the congregation at least until the 1920s (It seems likely that this church building may have been demolished as a result of the Denny Regrade, but this is not corroborated). Bjarne Moe’s design reflects the influence of National Romanticism movement in Scandinavian architecture. A sympathetic addition was made

to the building in 1956.<sup>52</sup> Aside from this church building, there was little building activity until the beginning of the 1940s, which coincides with an economic upswing resulting from World War II.

### **World War II and the 1940s**

As in the case of World War I, Lake Union produced ships and other supplies for the war effort and saw a brief upturn in its economy. B-17 and B-29 bomber parts were manufactured in a portion of the Kenworth Motor Truck Corporation Building between 1943 and 1944, at 1275 Mercer St, in the present Cascade neighborhood. 1114 Republican St, ostensibly a wood frame apartment building, was converted to a secret munitions warehouse.<sup>53</sup>

Of the other extant buildings from this period, several were originally built for specialty contractors or businesses. Since the early 1940s, A-One Ornamental Ironworks, located at 216 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, has occupied its present warehouse, which stands out because of its International Style detailing. The Moderne building, sited at 234 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, was originally built in 1941 for Lauch Brothers, a plaster contracting firm. In the same year, the Hostess Cake Warehouse at 434 Dexter Avenue North, was remodeled and given a new streamline form.

There continued to be building after the end of World War II. At 217 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Architect Roger Gotteland designed what was then a cutting-edge International Style building, distinguished by an angled, glazed second story. It was originally designed to house the upholstery shop for the V. Savinoff Furniture Studio and was completed in 1946. Along Fairview Avenue North, the International Style warehouse and store building for the Interlocking Tile Corporation at 433 Fairview Avenue, dates from 1947 and presents typical International Style elements: an expanse of glass block on the main, east elevation; a corner overhang, as well as a combination of steps and a built-in planter, which define a right angle shape at the northeast corner of the building. McLelland and Jones designed a noteworthy International Style Modern building for the Wilderman Refrigeration Company, which was initially completed in 1945. A sympathetic addition, which may have actually improved the building, was made in 1950.<sup>54</sup>

During the late 1940s, the eastern portion of South Lake Union also gained several warehouse buildings along Yale Avenue North, some more architecturally distinguished than others: 231 Yale

Avenue N. (1947), 221 Yale Avenue N. (1947), 434 Yale Avenue N. (1948) and 420 Yale Avenue N. (1946).<sup>55</sup> The one notable building from this period, which is not tied to an industrial use, is the Seattle Parks Department Headquarters, constructed in 1948. Built on the western edge of Denny Park, the Modernist building was designed by the firm of Young and Richardson.<sup>56</sup>

In 1949, a major earthquake hit Seattle. Famous for destroying cornices on many Pioneer Square buildings and raining down debris in all parts of Seattle, it is also generally held responsible for causing irreparable damage to the Cascade School. Other historians have speculated that since the Cascade area was becoming increasingly industrial, it was not considered a proper place to educate children, but that the building may have been salvageable. Be that as it may, by 1949, before the earthquake, only seven rooms of the school building were actually in use.<sup>57</sup> Even the more residential area, located in the eastern parts of South Lake Union neighborhood, had fewer residents. In general, South Lake Union was poised to become an even more industrialized area.

### **The 1950s - Rezoning and Interstate 5 – the 1960s**

By the 1950s, older warehouse buildings continued to be used, but new warehouses were also built. In 1950, two typical industrial buildings were added along Dexter Avenue North. 500 Dexter Avenue North, designed by Otis Hancock and Associates, was originally built as a maintenance building for the Western Union Telegraph Company. 231 Dexter Avenue North, designed by architect Max van House, originally housed a pharmaceutical products company. Both buildings, which are fairly simple, were designed with interior bow trusses and multi-pane glazing.

The mid-1950s, especially 1954, saw the construction of three 1950s Modernist buildings, designed by notable Seattle architecture firms. Along Fairview Avenue North, in 1954, Henry Bittman's firm, originally known for Beaux Arts and Mission Style buildings, completed a Modernist building for the Addressograph Multigraph Agency. The architect J. Lister Holmes designed an office building for his architecture firm at 215 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, completed in the same year. 231 Boren Avenue North, a Northwest Modernist office building, was designed by Waldron and Dietz and built in two phases in 1954 and 1956. It cantilevers the second story over the first story and combines concrete block, exposed timber beams and wood plank siding.<sup>58</sup>

Although several of the previous buildings described were office buildings, a significant turn of events took place in 1957, when the entire South Lake Union area was rezoned for manufacturing.<sup>59</sup> From 1959 to 1962, the construction of Interstate 5 also had a far-reaching effect on South Lake Union. It cut off the eastern portion of South Lake Union from Capitol Hill. Three hundred homes were demolished in Cascade, reducing the residential nature of the neighborhood. To the west, between the late 1950s and 1962, the Century 21 planners created the Seattle World's Fair grounds around a previous civic center, which included the Auditorium, later known as the Opera House. Although, in many respects a boon to Queen Anne Hill and to Seattle, the Seattle World's Fair unfortunately encouraged many owners in South Lake Union to convert their properties into parking lots.<sup>60</sup>

Neither the rezone to manufacturing, nor the loss of residences in the eastern part of the area deterred the Seattle Unity Church from constructing a church complex, north of the park and not far from the Denny Park Lutheran Church. The somewhat audacious design was created by Young Richardson and Carleton, the successors to Young and Carleton, who designed the Seattle Parks Headquarters. The complex was completed in 1960. Even though the area was becoming increasingly industrial, locations near Denny Park, in particular, seem to have attracted a few hardy souls and developments there were not strictly industrial.<sup>61</sup>

### **The 1970s to the 1980s**

Despite this building activity, during the 1960s, however, South Lake Union was considered in decline and "blighted," particularly as indicated by captions on slides of the University of Washington's College of Architecture and Urban Planning. The 1970s saw renewed concern and even activism, particularly on the part of Cascade neighborhood residents. There was increased attention to the area, and especially to the housing situation. Activists feared that proposed city zoning changes would lead to a further loss of housing.

In 1977, TRA, a successor to Young Richardson and Carleton and then one of Seattle's most influential architecture and planning firms, produced a study of available housing in Cascade for the City of Seattle. It reported that 240 residential units had been lost between 1970 and 1975.<sup>62</sup> The Cascade Community Council was also formed. Robert Fisher, a student at the University of

Washington, worked with the Council. His research, produced for a sociology class in 1974, explored the background, history and social trends in Cascade.<sup>63</sup>

The Seattle Times owned and still owns several properties in South Lake Union, not far from its signature building. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Seattle Times demolished many buildings on their properties. This included groups of older homes as well as the masonry Seattle Concert Theater, an important venue for meetings and for performances, including Friday night presentations of the Seattle Film Society. The result was that even more sites in South Lake Union became parking lots, as increased pressures and political disagreements continued into the 1990s.<sup>64</sup>

### **The 1990s to the Present**

During the 1990s, a series of articles by former Seattle Times columnist John Hinterberger brought up the idea of a park linking South Lake Union to downtown. This spurred the movement and proposal to create what was envisioned as a grand, landscaped park, known as the Seattle Commons. The park plan proposed clearing whole blocks of buildings near South Lake Union, in and around Westlake Avenue and replacing them with the park, in addition to new office buildings and condominium/apartment buildings.<sup>65</sup> The University of Washington and Zymogenetics, among others, also planned to locate facilities in the vicinity of the park. Paul Allen, one of the plan's chief supporters and benefactors, bought up many blocks of buildings in the path of the park, in preparation for their demolition and the construction of the park.

While Mayor Norm Rice described the park proposal as a "Christmas present" to the city, the issue was hotly contested.<sup>66</sup> Those in favor of the park invoked the Olmsted tradition and claimed it was the last chance for "a park in downtown Seattle." Others saw it as an echo of 1960s urban renewal projects, which was clearly insensitive to local business owners and residents. Opponents, including the noted landscape architect and historian, David Streatfield, also stated the park was a far cry from anything the Olmsteds might have designed. Some voters simply feared increased local taxes. The proposal was voted down in 1995.

The Commons proposal, although defeated, brought increased attention to the South Lake Union area, which previously had been mainly ignored by the majority of Seattle citizens. During and after

the Commons debates, some local activists, including architects, urban designers and landscape architects, stressed the unique combination of historical and housing resources and in particular, the small-town feel of the Cascade neighborhood. The area also became a popular subject for architecture, urban design and planning studies by students at the University of Washington.

Many longtime residents of the Cascade neighborhood continue to object to what they see as the gentrification of their neighborhood. Not all of the present housing developments, which have replaced Cascade's older apartment buildings and houses, are appreciated. It has been difficult for the various parties in South Lake Union to come to a consensus and there have been a series of landmark events, often pitting the opposing camps against each other, often in heated and angry disagreement. For instance, in 2002, the Seattle Housing Displacement Coalition and the Low Income Housing Institute unsuccessfully battled to save the Lillian Apartments, originally built in 1907. To Vulcan Northwest who had bought the property, the Lillian was a badly deteriorated building and not salvageable. To others, it was one of the oldest wooden apartment buildings of its kind left in Seattle and could have been restored although it was not designated as a City Landmark by the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board. To low income housing advocates, it provided affordable rental housing and its destruction meant further displacement of low income residents in Seattle.<sup>67</sup>

Subsequent to the adoption of the 1998 neighborhood plan, a major emphasis has been placed on the

development of biotechnical research facilities, additional residential facilities, and the creation of a vibrant and livable neighborhood. This vision has been supported and promoted by a major property owner in the neighborhood, the locally owned Vulcan Corporation, and by the city with the support on the South Lake Union Friends and Neighbors Community Council.

Future plans involve creating an area devoted to biotechnical research, as well as a vibrant and livable neighborhood. South Lake Union's quality and character, much like Seattle's, has been continually reshaped for better or for worse by major engineering feats, development pressures and ambitious urban design schemes. It has lost apartment buildings and historic housing stock, some of the oldest houses in Seattle. Yet, there still remain a significant number of historic buildings of value, that represent Seattle's earliest industries and history, as well as housing that is still both livable and affordable. In South Lake Union as a whole, in addition to landmark buildings in

Cascade, such as Immanuel Lutheran Church, St. Spiridon Orthodox Cathedral, the Jensen Block on Eastlake Avenue East and the New Richmond Laundry Building, City of Seattle landmarks are: the C. B. Van Vorst Building, the Troy Laundry Building, the Seattle Times Building and the West Earth Company/ Joseph Mayer Clock, located on Dexter Avenue North.

For a long time, South Lake Union was a blend of early frame houses and buildings devoted to light manufacturing. These buildings represented Seattle's early industrial development, as well as the neighborhood and people who made it possible. Although many of the frame houses are gone, the buildings highlighted in this inventory, a unique testament to Seattle's industrial beginnings, contribute to South Lake Union's character and sense of place.

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<sup>4</sup> Cascade Neighborhood Council & UW Center for Sustainable Communities, p 22 and 36

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<sup>6</sup> Committee for the Seattle Commons, Seattle Commons Plan, Draft 2, Seattle: Committee for the Seattle Commons, June 1993, p 207.

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<sup>13</sup> Bagley, p 372-375.

<sup>14</sup> Buetow, p 5.

<sup>15</sup> Fiset/ Crowley, "Cascade Neighborhood and South Lake Union—Thumbnail History."

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<sup>16</sup> "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Seattle," 1888 and 1893, (Microforms, University of Washington Libraries).

<sup>17</sup> Laura Cecil , Moving Forward, Looking Back: A Proposal for Urban Infill Housing in Cascade, Thesis (M.Arch.), University of Washington, 1993, p 8.

<sup>18</sup> Welford Beaton, The City That Made Itself, A Literary and Pictorial Record of the Building of Seattle, Seattle: Terminal Publishing Company, 1914, p 100.

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<sup>20</sup> Bagley, p 232.

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<sup>22</sup> “Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Seattle,” 1893.

<sup>23</sup> David Wilma, “Pioneer Women Organize Seattle’s First Relief Charity, the Ladies’ Relief Society on April 4, 1884,” 22 June 2001, Database online at: <<http://www.HistoryLink.org/>>

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<sup>26</sup> Link, “Cascade Neighborhood Inventory and Survey - Context Statement,” p 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Fiset/ Crowley, “Cascade Neighborhood and South Lake Union—Thumbnail History.”

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